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# **The Czech Republic's Democracy Promotion Policies and Priorities**

Vladimír Bartovic  
EUROPEUM Institute  
for European Policy, Czech Republic

**DISCUSSION PAPERS**



# The Czech Republic's Democracy Promotion Policies and Priorities<sup>1</sup>

As values-oriented diplomacy is supported by all the mainstream Czech parliamentary political parties,<sup>2</sup> democracy promotion has become one of the Czech Republic's most important foreign policy priorities. Democracy promotion is a part of a broader so-called transition policy – a term used in Czech foreign policy for policies for the promotion of human rights and democracy. According to the Concept of Transition Policy – the official strategy of Czech democracy and human rights promotion policies is stated thus: *Protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms together with promotion of democracy is one of the key objectives of Czech foreign policy.*<sup>3</sup> Czech foreign policy sees interlinkage and conditionality between democracy and human rights. It argues that it is not possible to separate the issues of the protection of human rights and democracy. Democracy is built upon respect for human rights and freedom, equality among individuals, their human dignity, and rule of law, justice, tolerance and solidarity. Democratic states respect human rights, provide instruments to promote them and prevent, control and redress their violations. On the other hand, strict enforcement of human rights leads towards the cultivation of democratic governance. The Concept of Transition Policy states that: *Human rights are the substance and democracy is the system that is the best known society set-up that promotes and protects this substance. Some civil and political rights are at the same time basic principles of democratic society.*<sup>4</sup>

The transition policy of the Czech Republic is based on the experience of the Czech Republic during the transformation process from a totalitarian regime with a centrally planned economy to a modern, democratic state with a functioning market economy. *This experience also includes non-violent resistance against the totalitarian regime that preceded the process of democratisation.*<sup>5</sup> From the beginning of this process, the Czech Republic opted for the values and principles shared by the Euro-Atlantic community of democratic states which it considers to be universal. These values and principles nowadays serve as a basis of the Czech transition policy.

Czech diplomacy promotes its transition policy objectives in bilateral relations with other countries, within the European Union policies as well as in international organisations. The aim of the transition policy is *“promotion of democracy in the world, development and stabilisation of political systems based on democratic principles and respect for human rights. In relation to specific countries, the goal of the transition policy is to facilitate development based on a fair and stable – democratic – social set-up.”*<sup>6</sup> Democracy and human rights are defining Czech foreign policy actions and decisions vis-à-vis specific countries, organisations and topics.

The Czech Republic applies its transition policy especially in countries that are culturally or geographically similar and where its transformation experience is relevant. Therefore it focuses primarily but not exclusively on its Eastern neighbours and the Western Balkan countries.

Based on the evaluation of the experience of the Czech Republic with democratic transition and social transformation, the Concept of the Transition Policy has set several thematic priorities that reflect specific interest and comparative advantages of the Czech Republic as well as its capacities and capabilities as a donor in democracy promotion.

**Civil society, human rights defenders** – this means support of a free civil society that is considered to be one of the foundations of a functioning democratic system and of human rights defenders who represent the conscience of the society and who carry out democratic ideas regardless their frequent persecution.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is an update of the article “Limited Resources, Global Ambitions – The Czech Republic's Democracy Assistance Policies and Priorities” from the publication *Democracy's New Champions – European Democracy Assistance after EU Enlargement*; written by Vladimír Bartovic and published by PASOS (Policy Association for an Open Society) in 2008.

<sup>2</sup> With the exception of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM)

<sup>3</sup> The Concept of Transition Policy, [http://www.mzv.cz/public/d3/98/9/583273\\_498398\\_New\\_concept\\_of\\_transition\\_policy.doc](http://www.mzv.cz/public/d3/98/9/583273_498398_New_concept_of_transition_policy.doc)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

**Media and access to information** – support for independent media that ensure access to information, allow for democratic debate in society and ensure an informed decision-making process in matters of public interest, including decisions in elections.

**Rule of law and good, democratic governance** – support of the interaction between state administration and civil society in order to strengthen democracy, transparency and to safeguard the rights of citizens.

**Electoral processes** – support for democratic elections, participation in its observation and evaluation in the form of transition promotion projects or through participation in external policy and actions of both the EU and international organisations (e.g., OSCE), including participation in election observation missions.

**Equality and non-discrimination** – assistance in overcoming the historical, social, cultural, religious and ideological barriers to equality, such as those leading to the low participation of women in the decision-making processes and public life, especially in politics.

## Czech transition policy tools

The Czech Republic implements its transition policy goals through a standard set of foreign policy activities in international organisations, bilateral relations, and the involvement of the Czech Republic in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. These instruments are supplemented by direct support to organisations or individuals that are working in the area of democratisation and human rights promotion.

### Multilateral instruments

The Czech Republic uses its membership in international organisations for promoting its views in the area of democratisation and human rights promotion. It actively participates in the activities of the UN and its agencies, the Council of Europe and OSCE. These organisations have established many mechanisms to protect human rights and basic democratic principles. Czech foreign policy supports the independent functioning of these human rights mechanisms and uses the outcomes of their work, whether it is in assessing the situation in individual countries or recommendations on how to improve the protection of human rights and democratic development. The Czech Republic succeeded in elections to the UN Human Rights Council in May 2011 after a several year-long effort. This was despite strong opposition from many countries with autocratic or totalitarian regimes (such as Cuba, Burma, etc.). The Czech government perceives its membership as *“an opportunity to wield more influence over this forum's proceedings and thus meet one of the main objectives of Czech foreign policy: to actively promote human rights worldwide. Council membership would also present the Czech Republic with the opportunity and means to pursue its objectives and priorities within the European Union more effectively.”*<sup>7</sup>

### Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union

The Czech Republic is considered to be one of the most active EU member states in promoting democratisation and human rights in the framework of CFSP. The Czech EU presidency in the first half of 2009 succeeded in getting the question of democracy promotion high on the EU agenda. Together with Sweden, the Czech Republic launched discussion on democracy building in EU external relations. The aim of this initiative was to *“identify which instruments the EU has at its disposal to build democracy and how these can be more effectively utilised in order to create a more coherent and overarching policy framework for democracy building and democratic reform processes, and how this framework can be implemented in relation to third countries.”*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign\\_relations/human\\_rights/candidature\\_for\\_the\\_un\\_human\\_rights/candidature.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign_relations/human_rights/candidature_for_the_un_human_rights/candidature.html)

<sup>8</sup> Democracy Building in EU's External Relations, Joint Swedish / Czech Issues Paper; [http://www.concord.se/upload//democracy\\_building\\_final.pdf](http://www.concord.se/upload//democracy_building_final.pdf)

In March 2009, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with non-governmental partners and the European Commission organised the conference “Building Consensus about EU Policies on Democracy Support” that discussed the need for consolidation of the EU foreign policy instruments enabling them to fulfil one of the top foreign policy aims – democracy promotion in the world.

These initiatives brought results in the presentation of the Joint Commission/Council General Secretariat paper on Democracy Building in EU External Relations which provided an overview of the tools and instruments the EU has at its disposal to build democracy and made recommendations on how to make their use more effective. This paper served as a basis for the Council Conclusions on Democracy Support in the EU's External Relations – Towards Increased Coherence and Effectiveness – that was adopted on 18 November 2009.<sup>9</sup> The Council conclusions were accompanied by the EU Agenda for Action on Democracy Support in EU External Relations which defines concrete steps towards improving the coherence and the effectiveness of EU democracy support. This Agenda also adopts the Czech view on democracy and human rights interlinkage and on the need to mainstream human rights, democracy, democratic governance, and the rule of law in all EU external relations activities, particularly in development policy and in certain sectorial policies, such as the Eastern Partnership.

The Czech government also strongly supported the idea of the reform of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), participated very actively in its re-negotiation, and consulted with Czech NGOs (such as People in Need) before developing its position on EIDHR reform.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs tabled several proposals with the aim of making EIDHR more flexible and making its regulations more understandable. One of the most important proposals made by the Czech side was to ensure that democratic forces in target countries are included in all stages of EIDHR (preparation and formulation of priorities for each country, evaluation, etc.). The Czech negotiators also stressed that the European Commission Delegations in the target countries should stay in permanent contact with those democratic forces. Almost all the Czech proposals were successful, with one notable exception: that state institutions in target countries (especially parliaments) should become eligible to receive funding from the reformed EIDHR.

The Czech government also strongly supports the initiative for creation of the European Endowment for Democracy. It hopes that this instrument can contribute to a more flexible approach and the ability of the EU to react to immediate needs for democracy assistance.

## Transition Promotion Programme – funding of democracy promotion

The Czech Republic has been providing democracy assistance since the middle of the 1990s as a part of Czech development aid. In 2005, transition promotion rose in importance in the framework of Czech foreign policy and became a distinct policy area. The majority of Czech democracy assistance aid is managed by the Human Rights and Transition Policy department (H RTP) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the so-called Transition Promotion programme, and the remaining aid is managed through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) regional office in Bratislava and the embassies of the Czech Republic in target countries. The funds managed by UNDP are a part of the Czech-UNDP Trust Fund in the framework of Czech development aid, while H RTP has a separate budget.

The Transition Promotion Programme represents the main tool of the Czech transition policy. Its main task is to *collect, manage and finance projects and activities to promote democracy and human rights in accordance with the objectives and priorities of the transition policy*.<sup>10</sup> It focuses on two groups of target countries:

- Developing countries and countries in transition – countries of the former Soviet Union (Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia), the Balkans (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo), and Iraq;
- Countries with undemocratic regimes where human rights are violated, such as Cuba, Belarus, and Burma.

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/111250.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/111250.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> The Concept of Transition Policy, [http://www.mzv.cz/public/d3/98/9/583273\\_498398\\_New\\_concept\\_of\\_transition\\_policy.doc](http://www.mzv.cz/public/d3/98/9/583273_498398_New_concept_of_transition_policy.doc)

Different goals and types of activities are supported in each of the two groups of target countries. Whereas in the first group the fostering of civil society, reform of state administration and capacity-building activities predominate; in the second group human and political rights, particularly freedom of expression, are the principal areas of support. The values-oriented diplomacy and co-operation with Czech NGOs enables H RTP to work without the permission of the host country, which is extremely important in the case of undemocratic regimes, such as those in power in Cuba, Burma, and Belarus.

## Historical overview

The Czech Republic's democracy assistance policies were launched even before the creation of the Transition Promotion programme. In 2003, the Czech government decided to participate in the economic reconstruction and stabilisation of Iraq. Soon, the government realised that – in addition to the reconstruction of the country's physical infrastructure – Iraq needed also support in the creation of civil society, with the implementation of the principles of the rule of law and with the education of its people. At the end of 2003, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs started to support educational and training activities, study trips and internships in Iraq.

The first funds – CZK 12 million (approximately € 376,000)<sup>11</sup> – were allocated specifically to democracy assistance in March 2004 upon the decision of the Czech government. Those funds were aimed at covering the education, training and internships of Iraqi experts with Czech companies. This was the first step in the creation of the transition promotion policy of the Czech Republic. In order to administer those funds in the future, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs created the Transition Promotion unit. After the positive experience in Iraq and strong lobbying from the NGO sector (mainly the largest Czech development NGO, People in Need), the government decided in February 2005 to extend the application of transition promotion also to other countries and increased its funding for the year 2005 to CZK 14m (€ 470,000). In April 2005, the Transition Promotion programme concept was adopted, which determined the priority policy areas and forms of democracy assistance provided by the Czech Republic. The Transition Promotion unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs allocated the first funds through a limited call for proposals.

Despite the recommendation of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)<sup>12</sup> to include transition promotion under the framework of Czech development assistance, in August 2007 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to merge the Department of Human Rights and the Transition Promotion unit within the Ministry, and created the Human Rights and Transition Policy department (H RTP).

This decision was motivated by the desire to improve the co-ordination of policies in the field of human rights protection in target countries. While the Department of Human Rights dealt mainly with research and analysis and represented the Czech Republic's interests in different international organisations and their bodies responsible for monitoring human rights, the Transition Promotion Unit was responsible for the management of specific projects improving the standards of human rights in target countries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also took into consideration the point that although transition promotion is considered part of development aid, its interconnection with the protection and promotion of human rights is more important.

## Institutional Framework

Czech democracy assistance is conducted on the basis of the Transition Promotion programme. This programme was adopted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with the Concept of Transition Policy in 2010.<sup>13</sup> This document defines the Czech Republic's assistance priorities, fields and forms of supported

<sup>11</sup> Annual average exchange rate CZK/EUR: 31.904 (2004), 29.784 (2005), 28.343 (2006), 27.762 (2007)

<sup>12</sup> In 2006, the OECD Committee for Development Aid conducted an assessment of Czech development co-operation. One of the recommendations of the Committee for improving the co-ordination of Czech development co-operation was the inclusion of the Transition Promotion unit under the Department of Development Co-operation.

<sup>13</sup> The first version of the programme was adopted in 2005. The document underwent substantial changes reflecting the experience from 2005 – 2010 and adoption of the broader strategic document Concept of Transition Policy.



activities, as well as the target countries of Czech democracy assistance. According to this document, Czech democracy assistance is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is complementary to the state foreign development aid and the humanitarian aid provided by the Czech Republic.

Czech democracy assistance is in conformity with Czech foreign policy priorities, and is determined by the national interests of Czech foreign policy. H RTP is responsible for the management of funds devoted to democracy assistance, the selection process and the evaluation of individual projects. Specifically, within H RTP there is a Transition Promotion programme Working Group which is responsible for the coordination of democracy assistance. The department closely co-operates with other departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – on conceptual issues with territorial departments and with Czech embassies in the target countries, and technically (utilising the same or similar budgetary and bureaucratic procedures) with the Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Aid Department.

### Grant mechanism

H RTP can be considered to be an “implementation agency” of Czech democracy assistance. As far as H RTP is responsible for the management of democracy assistance, strategic decisions on priorities and target countries are taken by the collegium of ministers and are subject to consultation with the majority of Ministry of Foreign Affairs departments (especially those with strong stakes – territorial departments and embassies in target countries). The only decision taken at the governmental level is the decision on the overall amount of funds spent on democracy assistance. Since 2006, the funds earmarked for transition promotion have been approved by the government as one package in combination with development assistance funding.

The majority of projects supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the budget allocated to democracy assistance are implemented by Czech NGOs. The funds for projects implemented by NGOs are distributed through a grant scheme announced in the autumn of each year. The successful projects are announced at the end of the previous year, giving grantees adequate time to properly implement projects so that they can complete them and the corresponding reporting by the end of the year.

This represents approximately 50% of available funds for each year. A further approximately 25% of funds are reserved for multi-annual projects approved in the grant scheme in previous years. The remaining 25% of funds are held as a reserve and distributed during the course of the year on an *ad hoc* basis. Although this is a less transparent way of allocation, it is important because its flexibility makes possible an immediate reaction to inputs and developments during the year. All the transition promotion funds are implemented either by NGOs or directly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or embassies in target countries. While 90% of funds are allocated for projects in Transition policy priority countries, the remaining 10% may be used all over the world.

Since 2005, there have been seven annual rounds of calls for proposals under the grant scheme mechanism and two special calls (a special call for Belarus in 2006, and a special call for MENA countries in 2011). In 2005 – due to the lack of time – there was only a limited call for proposals without a clear set of criteria, requirements and settled procedures. Several organisations submitted proposals and they were approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a rolling basis. Together, 13 projects were approved in this limited call.

The regular grant scheme was implemented for the first time in 2006. After manipulated presidential elections in Belarus in the spring of 2006, the Czech government decided to allocate an additional CZK 20m for democracy assistance in Belarus, and the Transition Promotion unit<sup>14</sup> issued a special call for proposals. This situation was repeated again in 2011 when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reacted quickly to the social movements in Northern Africa and the Middle East called the “Arab Spring” and conducted a special CZK 3m call for proposals for direct support of several small projects in the region.

<sup>14</sup> In 2006, it was the Transition Promotion Unit of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, before the unit was merged into H RTP.

The grant scheme regulates the types of projects supported, defines eligible applicants and activities, and sets the financial and legal requirements for project applications. Each applicant must secure at least 10% of co-financing for the project.

Organisations eligible to receive funds from the Transition Promotion programme comprise:

- civic associations
- public benefit companies
- foundations
- churches
- regional governments and municipalities
- universities
- interest-based associations of legal entities.

Evaluation of the submitted projects is undertaken in a three-step procedure:

1. fulfilment of formal criteria
2. internal evaluation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
3. a commission of officials and independent experts.

All the project proposals are checked at the beginning of the evaluation to determine whether they meet the formal criteria (eligibility as a legal entity, match with priority areas of transition promotion, co-financing, etc.). This is done by the so called “envelope commission,” which consists of Ministry officials. After this step, the projects are evaluated by H RTP and the respective Ministry of Foreign Affairs territorial departments, as well as the embassies in the target countries. H RTP evaluates how the projects contribute to the transition policy of the Czech Republic according to the following criteria:

- contribution of the project to the target country’s development and knowledge of local conditions (30%)
- expert quality of the project (10%)
- financial and technical feasibility and timing (10%)
- adequacy of the budget in relation to the aims of the project (15%)
- proven expertise of the applicant organisation and its experts (15%)
- co-financing (15%).

Embassies and territorial departments evaluate projects from the territorial point of view (feasibility and relevance of the project implementation in the target country), and give their recommendation as to whether to support the project or not. Projects that receive more than 50% from H RTP and/or are recommended by territorial departments<sup>15</sup> and embassies are submitted to the Commission of Ministry officials and independent experts. Those where the recommendation of H RTP, territorial departments and embassies differ are also passed to the Commission with a note that a common recommendation could not be found.

The final decision is made by the Commission. The Commission members are proposed by the director of H RTP, and are appointed by the Chief of the Security and the Multilateral Section of the Ministry. Commission members’ names are published only after the evaluation and publication of their decision on projects. Commission members each mark the project proposals submitted for their consideration on a point scale (0, “ or 1 point), and the projects with the highest numbers of points are approved.

Projects approved by the Commission usually then enter the so-called “negotiating phase,” where successful applicants have to amend the projects according to the recommendations of the Commission. In this phase, budget cuts are also applied to many projects. The Commission can also approve a project but for budgetary reasons postpone its implementation until the necessary funds are secured.

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<sup>15</sup> South Europe & South East Europe Department, North Europe & East Europe Department, American Department, and Asia & Pacific Department

As to the transparency of the process, H RTP does not publish information explaining why specific projects were not approved. It is, however, open to each applicant to consult with concerning the grounds for refusal.

### **Priority topics of the Transition Promotion Programme**

The topics and sectors of the TRANS Programme are selected in light of the situation and demand in the target countries, taking into account the abilities and experience of project promoters (Czech civil society organisations) and, last but not least, the available budget. The list currently includes:

#### **Promoting the development of civil society**

- capacity building (management, fundraising, public relations, advocacy)
- legal assistance
- encouraging the general public to get involved in civil society activities
- promoting private donorship
- networking

#### **Cooperating with local authorities**

- civic participation and the establishment of closer interaction between the civil society and local authorities
- public accountability
- partnership projects
- twinning

#### **Media**

- promotion of media independence
- developing new media and social networks
- training for journalists

#### **Youth and education**

- education for active citizenship
- critical approach to information and the ability to formulate and present one's views
- support for new teaching methods
- multicultural education, information about the European Union, human rights awareness, environmental awareness
- opportunities for cooperation with Czech institutions of higher education

#### **Human rights defenders**

- raising public awareness of human rights defenders
- encouraging the establishment of international contacts
- direct support to individual human rights defenders, political prisoners and their families

As mentioned before, the priority policy areas and also the forms of democracy assistance vary from country to country. There is no document specifying the preferred policy areas or forms of transition promotion for the individual target countries. The decision is made on an *ad hoc* basis by H RTP (after consultation with Czech embassies in target countries), although it can be assumed that the decisive factor is whether the target country has a democratic or undemocratic regime. In practice, the following policy areas have been mainly but not exclusively considered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as crucial in different target countries:



**Belarus**

- support of freedom of expression, independent media and information
- education of alternative political elites
- assistance to unjustly persecuted people

**Cuba and Burma**

- support of democratic opposition, dissent and human rights defenders

**Ukraine**

- transfer of knowledge of the EU and NATO accession processes

**Serbia**

- development of corporate sponsorship/philanthropy, development of corporate social responsibility, increasing NGOs' fundraising skills
- NGOs' capacity building

**Bosnia and Hercegovina**

- Transfer of knowledge from the integration processes
- Capacity building of NGOs

**Kosovo**

- Cooperation between civil society and state

**Georgia**

- capacity building of NGOs working with refugees and internally displaced persons

**Moldova**

- capacity building of NGOs in Transnistria
- facilitation of co-operation of NGOs from both sides of the Dniester river

**Iraq**

- fostering the non-governmental sector.

The funds allocated to democracy assistance through the Transition Promotion programme increased from CZK 12m (€ 376,000) in 2004 to CZK 43m (€ 1,790,000?) in 2010. All the priority countries of Czech democracy assistance are listed in the OECD Development Assistance Committee list of official development assistance (ODA) recipients. Funds allocated to democracy assistance projects are therefore considered a part of the Czech Republic's ODA. Czech ODA is constantly increasing. While in 2002 it was € 48.11m (0.065% of gross domestic product (GDP), in 2010 it reached € 171,6m (0.127% of GDP). Funds allocated for democracy assistance (only through the Transition Promotion Programme) increased from 0.49% of total ODA in 2004 to 1.31% in 2010, but the figure still remains extremely low in comparison with other types of development aid.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Source: Development Cooperation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

**Transition Promotion Programme grant scheme statistics (2005 – 2010)**

	2005	2006 (regular)	2006 (Belarus)	2007	2008	2009	2010
Received project proposals	13	35	23	53	42	35	38
Passed formal criteria check	N/A	33	22	41	40	32	32
Approved	13	19	10	17	14	21	21
Approved with postponed implementation	0	0	0	6	4 <sup>17</sup>	0	2

**Czech embassies**

Czech embassies in the relevant territories are also involved in the transition policy. They provide input for Ministry of Foreign Affairs decision-making on the selection of appropriate thematic priorities for each country. They closely cooperate with local civil society, maintain contact with human rights defenders and use available resources to support them. Embassies also participate in local EU working groups on human rights (HRWG) and in local donor coordination. In countries, where transition promotion projects are being implemented, the Czech embassies participate in monitoring and evaluation of these projects.<sup>18</sup>

The Ministry annually allocates approximately € 1m to Czech embassies mainly in the priority countries of Czech development assistance,<sup>19</sup> which can be distributed among recipients in these countries on the basis of the decisions of the respective embassies. These funds can also be used for democracy assistance projects, but this depends on each embassy's priorities.

**Foreign Donors Supporting Czech Democracy Assistance NGOs' Projects**

After the fall of communism, many foreign donors decided to assist Czech society in its transition towards democracy and pluralism. This process was successfully completed with the Czech Republic's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures (OECD, NATO and EU), after which the donors brought most of their funding for Czech NGOs to an end. However, some of them realised the value of the knowledge and experience of Czech NGOs and individuals generated during the transition period in the Czech Republic. They also understood that it would be worth using this knowledge and experience in countries still on the path to becoming fully democratic and stabilised.

In addition, the countries in receipt of democracy assistance in the regions of Eastern Europe and the Balkans consider the Central and Eastern European transition experience very much applicable to their situation, unlike that of Western Europe or the USA, which never went through such a process. This has led several foreign donors, such as the US National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Open Society Institute (OSI), Center for a Free Cuba, or Directorio Democrático Cubano, to support Czech NGOs in their efforts to transfer their knowledge and experience to countries with undemocratic regimes or countries in transition. While Center for a Free Cuba and Directorio Democrático Cubano has supported People in Need's projects only in Cuba, NED has also financed projects in Iraq and Eastern Europe, and OSI has financed projects in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

<sup>17</sup> These projects proposed activities in Georgia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked applicants to prepare a joint project that would be supported from the Transition Promotion Programme

<sup>18</sup> The Concept of Transition Policy, [http://www.mzv.cz/public/d3/98/9/583273\\_498398\\_New\\_concept\\_of\\_transition\\_policy.doc](http://www.mzv.cz/public/d3/98/9/583273_498398_New_concept_of_transition_policy.doc)

<sup>19</sup> Programme countries: Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Moldova, Mongolia and project countries: Georgia, Cambodia, Kosovo, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Serbia.

## National Endowment for Democracy (NED), USA

NED has drawn on the expertise of Czech NGOs mainly for projects aimed at fostering the skills of journalists, NGOs (in all supported countries), independent groups, such as dissidents and unregistered NGOs (Belarus, Cuba), and local administration (Iraq, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine). NED has also supported projects aimed at dialogue between civil society and state administration in Western Balkans countries (Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo and Serbia).

## Open Society Institute (OSI)

OSI finances democracy assistance projects through its international programme, “East – East Partnership beyond Borders,” which supports co-operation between partners from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. The main goal of the programme is to help the post-Soviet countries in their transition to become standard democratic states. The foundation supports projects fostering, for instance, the rule of law, development of the NGO sector, anti-corruption measures, managing migration, and promoting equal opportunities. In 2005, OSI decided to launch a sub-programme for European integration to support co-operation between new EU member states, EU candidate countries and EU neighbours. Besides the projects mentioned above, OSI has supported the travel of Czech representatives in the framework of projects undertaken with the support of the East-East Partnership Beyond Borders programme in other countries.

## Organisations Working in the Field of Democracy Assistance

There are about 20 organisations in the Czech Republic that work in the field of democracy assistance. Apart from Civic Belarus, none of them was created solely for this purpose, and democracy assistance is not their exclusive area of work. Many NGOs working in this field are think-tanks and research institutes, such as the Prague Security Studies Institute (PSSI), EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, Association for International Affairs (AMO), or Democracy and Culture Studies Centre (CDK), which use expertise generated during the transformation process of the Czech Republic and transfer it to countries in transition. In recent years, the field of democracy assistance has been dominated by People in Need (PIN), which was the first Czech NGO to start working consistently in the area. Other NGOs<sup>20</sup> began implementing democracy assistance projects mainly after the Transition Promotion programme was launched, although even before this some projects fostering good governance were funded by Czech ODA and by the OSI East-East Partnership Beyond Borders programme.

The establishment of the Transition Promotion programme has boosted the activities of Czech NGOs in the area of democracy assistance. They soon realised the need for co-ordination of their efforts when duplication of activities for the same target groups started to occur. With its overview of the activities funded through the annual grant scheme, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became aware of the duplication, and from the beginning strongly supported the need for coordination.

On the initial impulse of People in Need<sup>21</sup> in 2008, ten Czech NGOs decided to create the Association for Democracy and Human Rights (DEMAs) that serves as a platform for co-operation, discussion, advocacy, lobbying, and promotion of the activities of its members in the field of democratisation and promotion of human rights. DEMAS with its Secretariat funded from the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and an NED grant has become a strong advocate for the democratisation agenda both in the Czech Republic and in the EU.

<sup>20</sup> With the exception of EDUCON Prague, which has been implementing knowledge-transfer projects

<sup>21</sup> The final members upon registration in the summer of 2008 were: People in Need, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, PASOS (Policy Association for an Open Society), Association for International Affairs (AMO), Transitions Online, Civic Belarus, Forum 2000 Foundation, Agora Central Europe, Democracy and Culture Studies Centre, Yes for Europe, Respekt Institute.

## About the author

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**The Institute of Public Affairs**  
**Address: 5 Szpitalna St., # 22, 00-031 Warsaw, Poland**  
**tel. +48 22 556 42 99**  
**fax +48 22 556 42 62**  
**e-mail: [isp@isp.org.pl](mailto:isp@isp.org.pl); [www.isp.org.pl](http://www.isp.org.pl)**